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## Statement submitted by Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life Education Fund, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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**Statement**

"As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind", states the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. "Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the [Sustainable Development] Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first" (paragraph 4).

The international community should seek to implement the post-2015 development agenda without leaving unborn children behind. There is no right under international law to kill the unborn through abortion. Target 5.6 of the Sustainable Development Goals reaffirms, with respect to this issue, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action, which do not call for the legalization of abortion or recognize any right to abortion. The Programme of Action states, "Any measures or changes related to abortion within the health system can only be determined at the national or local level according to the national legislative process" (paragraph 8.25).

Nations have good reason to protect the unborn. The Agenda for Sustainable Development "emphasize[s] the responsibilities of all States ... to respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind" (paragraph 19). Unborn children are human beings and, therefore, are subjects of human rights. This segment of society should not be denied protection on the basis of distinctions such as age, size, ability, or stage of biological development. Indeed, the right to life of all human beings is protected by international human rights instruments. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states, "Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law" (Article 6.1). The Declaration of the Rights of the Child affirms that "the child ... needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth".

Abortion is not necessary to combat maternal mortality. The Sustainable Development Goals aim to reduce the global maternal mortality ratio (MMR) to 70 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030 (Target 3.1). This objective can be met by prioritizing adequate nutrition, prenatal care, skilled birth attendants, emergency obstetric care, clean water, and sanitation. Maternal health depends on factors like these — not on the legality or availability of abortion. Ireland, the Republic of Poland, Malta, Chile, the State of Kuwait, Libya, and the United Arab Emirates ban most or all abortions and have very low MMRs. Target 3.1 simply does not require legalized abortion.

For these reasons, the international community ought to pursue the Sustainable Development Goals without promoting the legalization of abortion in countries that provide legal protection for unborn children. The sovereign authority of nations to determine abortion laws must be respected.